TEACHING AND LEARNING

3 Tools for Shorter, Chatter, More Participatory Remote Business Research Instruction

REECE STEINBERG

Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada
rsteinberg@ryerson.ca

The university where I work swiftly moved to remote library instruction when our city shut down during the pandemic. In response, I made major adjustments to business instruction to accommodate trends I noticed right away:

- A desire for shorter sessions
- More need for structured hands-on participation due to shorter attention spans
- A preference for chat communication over voice

I experimented with a variety of methods, learned as much as I could about online pedagogy, and came up with three tools that I have been using together with success: Padlet, reversed market research sessions, and short video clips.

Padlet

Picture 3 to 4 brightly-colored individual chat threads, each dedicated to a specific question or topic set by the instructor (see Figure 1). Participant responses are divided by subject rather than as one long thread, making them easier to understand while presenting. Padlet doesn't replace chat as a place for students to ask questions; instead, it creates a platform for students to individually answer questions related to activities during the session and to see others' answers. For example, I use it for an icebreaker about what students find easy or hard about research, as well as asking them for examples of information from a specific industry report that would be useful in a business plan.

Padlet has generated more participation than any other online method I have tried, sometimes more than the participation during past in-person classes. More information on Padlet is available from their site (<https://padlet.com/>).

Figure 1. Padlet Chat Thread. Used with permission from Padlet.

Reversed Market Research Sessions

I recognized from early online sessions that instruction was improved when it included more structured hands-on time and motivation for students to stay engaged. Instead of instructing students step-by-step--starting with how to access a database, followed by searching to find an industry report, then talking about industry reports--I tried conducting these sessions in the reverse order. I began by providing students new to market research with a direct link to an industry report, then asked them to tell me what would be useful about it. Often they were expressive and interested and quickly added to a Padlet (see Figure 1) to share what they were finding. I liked being able to show students what they can hope to find before going through search tips and steps. Their interest in the sample industry report provided motivation for learning how to search for the report. This could work equally well with other types of resources that students are unfamiliar with and that require learning new techniques to access.

Video Clips

In order to shorten classes and still provide essential instruction, I started creating video clips on using LibGuides, specific databases, and more. These clips were 2 to 3 minutes in length and were quickly produced. They did not reproduce the exhaustive vendor videos, but went over the steps of how to access the resource, what it is useful for, and basic searching strategies. They served the added purpose of being a friendly reminder of library research assistance available to students. I embedded a few of them at the end of my presentation slides so students had easy access to them after an instruction session. Students and faculty have reacted positively to the video clips. Examples of these videos are available on Ryerson University Library's Business Playlist (<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCHBKgLloXQgMQOFyIlnae3XizhioiAxa>).